



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
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May 14, 2003

**To:** State Board of Health Members  
**From:** Children's Health and Well-Being Committee Members  
**Re:** **URGENCY TO PREVENT AND REDUCE OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY IN CHILDREN**

**Summary**

The urgency to prevent and control overweight and obesity in children is one of today's great challenges and great opportunities in public health. Everywhere we turn we find news articles and reports stressing the danger of being overweight and obese and how these conditions have reached epidemic proportions. Most of these articles and reports state that people need good nutrition and physical activity to prevent and control their weight and improve physical fitness.

Whether you are an adult or a child, your life is affected by the food you eat and the exercise you do. However, solutions to the epidemic of overweight and obesity require more than changing personal behavior, especially for children. Solutions must involve families, schools, businesses, communities, local state and federal agencies and organizations, public and private policies, personal attitudes, as well as the multifaceted media. The *Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity* sets five overarching principles necessary for strategies and actions to reduce overweight and obesity:

- Promote the recognition of overweight and obesity as major public health problems.
- Assist Americans in balancing healthful eating with regular physical activity to achieve and maintain a healthy or healthier body weight.
- Identify effective and culturally appropriate interventions to prevent and treat overweight and obesity
- Encourage environmental changes that help prevent overweight and obesity
- Develop and enhance public-private partnerships to help implement this vision.

Over the last year, the Children's Health and Well-Being Committee has examined and participated in efforts to prevent and reduce overweight and obesity in children. We have found many organizations, agencies, and individuals already deeply involved in developing broad scale solutions. Today we present a panel of experts prepared to discuss efforts underway in Washington, including efforts in which the panelists are involved. We hope to engage the Board in discussing what role it could play to prevent and reduce overweight and obesity in children.

**Recommended Board Action**

None

**Discussion**

First, the Board will hear from Donna Johnson, Associate Director of the Center for Public Health Nutrition in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of Washington. Dr. Johnson will provide a brief overview of the growing epidemic of overweight and obese children, describe efforts underway focused on improving nutrition and physical activity at the federal and state levels, and discuss work she is involved in through the Center for Public Health Nutrition.

Second, Mr. Kyle Unland, lead support of the Diabetes, Nutrition, and Physical Activity Program at the Department of Health, will speak. Mr. Unland will present *The Department of Health Nutrition and Physical Activity State Plan* funded by the Centers for Control and Disease Prevention. He will also discuss future steps to implement the plan.

Third, the Board will hear from Paul Flock, director of childhood nutrition for the Olympia School District. Mr. Flock will discuss the Olympia School District's pilot program to introduce organic salad bars in schools and the District's efforts to develop a nutrition strategy.

Finally, Dr. Amy Belko, president of the Thurston Mason Medical Society and Board Member of the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics will discuss the academy's perspective on preventing and reducing overweight and obesity in children.